

April 5, 2007

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chairman, and Members of the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**From:** Dr. R. Lynn Kelley, Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Center of Excellence (Teacher Education)**

**New Center, FY 2007-08**

**Funding Allocation to Existing Centers, FY 2007-08**

**Background**

Requests for Proposals for Centers of Excellence for the FY 2007-08 project year were issued to all eligible public and private institutions in September 1, 2006. At the request of the Education Oversight Committee, proposals were requested that focus on literacy in adolescent education. Five proposals were received for consideration:

- ❖ Claflin University  
Center of Excellence on Middle Level Education
- ❖ Coastal Carolina University  
Center of Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap
- ❖ University of South Carolina - Aiken  
Center of Excellence in Middle-level Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching (CE-MIST)
- ❖ University of South Carolina - Columbia  
Center for Excellence in the Advancement of Young Adolescent Learning



A Review Panel consisting of two representatives from current Centers of Excellence, one representative from the Department of Education, one representative from the Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative, one representative from the Education Oversight Committee and one staff member from the Commission on Higher Education was appointed to review the proposals and to make recommendations. The Panel Report is attached (**Attachment 1**). The Panel was chaired by Dr. Ronald Joekel, a professor from the University of Nebraska. The report of the Review Panel is attached (**Attachment 2**). Abstracts for the four proposed Centers are also attached (**Attachment 3**).

## **Discussion**

The Review Panel met on March 17, 2007, to receive presentations from the representatives from each institution and discuss the merits of each proposed center. The panel's recommendation is to fund the proposed center from the University of South Carolina - Aiken. The panel members conducted a lengthy discussion about the proposals and concluded that the proposed center from USC-Aiken rated the highest in the panel's discussion. The purpose of the Center of Excellence in Middle-level Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching (CE-MIST) is to serve as a state-of-the-art resource center that will improve middle level education. CE-MIST will develop and model state-of-the-art teaching strategies, conduct research, disseminate information and provide training for middle level teachers and the higher education faculty that will work with them. CE-MIST will focus on working with students and teachers at three low-performing schools: A. L. Corbett Middle School, Leavelle McCampbell Middle School and Johnson Edgefield Trenton Middle School.

The proposed centers from Claflin University, Coastal Carolina University, and USC-Columbia had salient features and potential, but the panel was charged with selecting one proposal they felt had the most promise to fulfill the purpose of the Center of Excellence Program Guidelines and improving the content knowledge of middle level students. In FY 2006-07, the S.C. General Assembly approved the Commission's request for an appropriation of \$685,657. With five centers in the second, third, and fourth years of funding (**Attachment 4**), funding is available for only one new Center for FY 2007-08, contingent upon the availability of funds and the approval from the General Assembly for an additional Center.

The proposed center from USC-Columbia, a Center of Excellence in the Advancement of Young Adolescent Learning, was strongly considered for funding. The purpose of the center was to create and sustain a model of school reform in two low performing schools: one rural and one in the metropolitan Columbia area that would focus on building student-teacher relationships, raising expectations, and extending teacher knowledge. The proposal appeared to focus on a small number of teachers at the schools and lacked a specific quantitative evaluation. The review panel expressed



concern about the institutional commitment to the project and suggested that the first year of the project be implemented prior to resubmitting the project for future funding possibilities through this program.

The proposed Center of Excellence on Middle Level Education from Claflin University also was evaluated as having strong potential for funding. The Center's purpose is to improve student achievement at the middle level. The Center would offer professional development courses and graduate coursework for in-service teachers, academic support services to middle level students and character education and career exploration to middle level students in Orangeburg 3, Orangeburg 4, Orangeburg 5, and Calhoun County School District. The panel was impressed with the Saturday Academies for middle school students and appreciated the school districts that would be involved in the project. The panel voiced concerns about the budget and suggested that Claflin work with CHE staff prior to submitting future proposals. The panel would like to have seen more evidence on commitment from the institution and the school districts as there were no members from the school districts or the institution present at the meeting.

A Center of Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap was proposed by Coastal Carolina University. The primary purpose of the Center was to raise the academic achievement of middle school students in high poverty schools by increasing the quality and quantity of Middle School teachers through a state-of-the-art, clinically based pre-service and in-service program. The panel felt the proposal did not focus on the content in middle schools, but more on the achievement gap. Goals and objectives were not specific to middle schools and it was difficult to get a sense of the project other than in broad generalities. A concern was expressed that the proposal was focused on current goals of the university and not on building a "new" program/center. The panel would like to have seen more evidence on commitment from the institution and the school districts as there were no members from the school districts or the institution present at the meeting.

These project proposals have been referred to the Commission's *Improving Teacher Quality Competitive Grants Program*. The institutions proposing these projects have been urged either to adapt their proposals to the requirements of that program, and submit them for funding, or to revise the proposals and resubmit to next year's Center of Excellence (Education) competition.

### **Recommendation**

In keeping with authority previously delegated to it by the Commission, the staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to the Review Panel's recommendation and approve an award to the University of South Carolina - Aiken to establish the Center of Excellence in Middle-level Interdisciplinary



Strategies for Teaching (CE-MIST) in the amount of \$150,000, pending submission of 1) a revised assessment that focuses on student outcomes; 2) the inclusion of an external evaluator; 3) a description of activities that include elements of highly effective middle schools and 3) a revised budget that includes an external evaluator and justification for staff salaries.

The staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commend favorably to Commission approval for continued funding for Clemson University, College of Charleston, Francis Marion University, University of South Carolina–Columbia, and University of South Carolina–Beaufort pending submission of a formal budget request for FY 2007-08 and a final report for FY 2006-07.

- Attachment 1:** Report of the Review Panel
- Attachment 2:** Review Panel Members
- Attachment 3:** Proposal Abstracts
- Attachment 4:** Continuing Centers of Excellence
- Attachment 5:** Centers of Excellence Rubric/Rating Form
- Attachment 6:** Review Panel Agenda



## **Attachment 1**

### **REPORT OF THE REVIEW PANEL**

#### **SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAMS EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1984**

**March 21, 2007**

#### **PROJECT YEAR 2007-2008**

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education appointed a Panel to review proposals submitted to the Commission for the establishment of Centers of Excellence for the Fiscal Year 2007-2008. The Panel met on March 7, 2007, at the Commission Office, to interview teams representing the four colleges and universities that had submitted proposals to the Commission and to make recommendations to the Commission about the disposition of the proposals. A list of Panel members and their affiliation is attached to this report (Attachment 2).

In advance of the meeting, members of the Review Panel were sent the *Guidelines for Submission of Proposals –Centers of Excellence Education Improvement Act of 1984*, four proposals that had been submitted by colleges and universities for consideration for the project year 2007-2008. Members were asked to read and acquaint themselves with the Guidelines and the four proposals prior to the March 7, 2007 meeting. Panel members were asked to complete a Proposal Review Rubric/Rating Form for each of the five proposals. (Attachment 5)

The Panel recognizes the substantial effort and institutional commitment that goes into conceptualizing, developing, and writing proposals following the Commission's guidelines. The four institutions submitting proposals are to be congratulated for undertaking this task and creating proposals to enhance the education for students in South Carolina Schools.

In addition to reading the proposals prior to the March 7 meeting, panel members had an opportunity to hear representatives from the each proposal to explain their proposal and answer questions. The teams were comprised of administration/faculty/ from the institutions of higher education and in some cases, representatives from the K-12 schools who were partners identified in the proposal.

A schedule was developed whereby the proposal team was assigned thirty minutes to make a presentation on their proposal and answer question questions from Panel members. (Attachment 6) Following the interviews, the Panel discussed each proposal at some lengths identifying the strengths of each proposal as well as any areas of concern. All four of the proposals were immediately identified as having potential for the improvement of instruction and education at the middle school level.



The four proposals and their titles presented in alphabetical order were:

Claflin University	Center on Middle Level Education
Costal Carolina University	Center of Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap
University of South Carolina Aiken	Center of Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap
University of South Carolina Columbia	Center of Excellence in the Advancement of Adolescent Learning

All four proposals had salient features and potential, but the committee was charged with selecting the one proposal they felt had the most promise to fulfill the purpose of the Center of Excellence Program guidelines.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The panel recommends funding for the University of South Carolina Aiken proposed *Center Of Excellence in Middle-Level, Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching*. The purpose of the Center is to serve as a state-of-the-art resource center that will improve middle level education. It will develop and model state-of-the-art teaching strategies, conduct research, disseminate information and provide training for middle-level teachers at the pre-service level and with middle level teacher in the field. Additionally, higher education faculty will engage in professional development activities that will be held at USCA and have a distance education component. Two low-performing schools from Aiken County (A.L. Corbett and Leavelle McCampbell Middle School), and one low performing school ( Johnston-Edgefield-Trenton (JET) Middle Level School in Edgefield County will be partners in the project to improve middle level education.

Five (5) goals have been identified and multiple objectives and activities are identified to fulfill the promise of the Center

## **GOALS:**

### **1. Develop and model exemplary teacher training programs.**

- Objective 1: Incorporate reading in the content areas into content methods classes.
- Objective 2: Offer courses and workshops for in-service teacher.
- Objective 3: Develop pre-service, field-based experiences in teaching.
- Objective 4: Empower teachers to work with students scoring below basic.



**2. Providing hands-on, inquiry based, research-supported programs.**

Objective 1: Engage middle level students in enrichment programs.

Objective 2: Develop Interdisciplinary Units & Traveling Trunks.

**3. Developing an influential constituency for the Center (CE-MIST)**

Objective 1: Develop an influential constituency for the CE-MIST.

Objective 2: Ensure that CE-MIST continues after funding from the state ends.

**4. Achieving a position of leadership in the state**

Objective 1: Develop and model a strong program

Objective 2: Disseminate information about interdisciplinary teaching.

**5. Developing a detailed research agenda**

Objective 1: Compile an understanding through a literature review.

Objective 2: Develop a solid research agenda.

Objective 3: Application of research findings.

The Center will draw heavily upon the National Middle Level School Association (NMSA) research and standards for middle level education. For example; NMSA research indicates that middle level students require ongoing concrete, experiential learning in order to develop intellectually and an integrated curriculum that is more compatible with the way their brains work. Research has shown that middle level students perform better with an interdisciplinary or integrated curriculum.

The National Middle Level School Association has adopted standards for teacher preparation that will be utilized in the Center's programs. It is expected that middle level candidates and in-service teachers: (1) understand that middle level curriculum should be relevant challenging, integrative, and exploratory; (2) understand the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge and how to make connections among subject areas when planning curriculum; (3) know how to incorporate all young adolescent's ideas, interests, and experiences into curriculum; and (4) understand multiple assessment strategies that effectively measure student mastery of the curriculum.

Students in the pre-service program will not only understand these four standards/principles, but they will be expected to implement them during clinical experiences. Salient features of the CE-MIST program call for providing integrated programming and curriculum exemplary practices, the establishment of teams with planning time provided, mentors to work with the teams to identify strategies and help teachers implement them-practice them, try them out in their classroom and then reassemble as teams to share experiences. During these sessions feedback and new strategies are generated and shared. Research by Martens &



Flowers in 2003 revealed that poverty schools who utilized high levels of teaming and utilized classroom practice demonstrated improved reading scores.

The evaluation component will follow the Guskey model of professional development, whereby connections are made between the effectiveness of the professional development and its ultimate impact on student outcomes. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be collected and analyzed to monitor & improve the program as it unfolds (formative assessment), and to determine the effectiveness of the program (summative assessment).

Collaborative planning has taken place between the University of South Carolina Aiken and the school districts and schools involved. The Ruth Patrick Science Education Center presents opportunities for the University and schools in the area to know and understand each other. The project director will be Dr. Gary Senn, director of the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center. He has extensive experience with NSF grants and other projects that will serve the proposed Center well. The commitment of USCA is substantial as Dr. Senn will be devoting 70% of his time to CE-MIST; Dr. Tom Smyth of USCA will be devoting 15% of his time to the Center; Dr. Debbie Haskell who has developed the USCA Middle Level Program will devote 15% of her time to the Center; Dr. Timothy Lintner of USCA will devote 15 % of his time to the Center. Additionally, Deborah McMurtrie, John Hutchens, and Darlene Smalley of USCA will be involved with the project.

The University of South Carolina Aiken has developed a good relationship with school districts and schools and it is involved in a number of cooperative projects with them. The long term commitment to the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center by the University demonstrates the commitment of the University and it is expected to continue with the Center for Excellence in Middle-Level, Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching. The selection panel was particularly pleased that several members representing both the University and the school districts and schools involved were in attendance and participated at the March 7 presentation. Signed partnerships agreements and support from Chancellor Thomas Hallman, and Dean Jeffrey Priest of the School of Education were included in the proposal. Letters of support from Sharon Keesley, Superintendent of the School District of Edgefield County, and Linda Eldridge, Superintendent of the Aiken County Public Schools were also in the proposal. Additionally, letters of agreement from the three partner middle schools were also included in the proposal.

## **SUMMARY:**

The Review Panel felt the five goals, objectives for each goal and the multiple activities to be conducted were succinctly and clearly stated to guide the Center. The Center will address pre-service preparation of middle-level teachers, provide professional in-service help for practicing middle level educators, higher education faculty and major attention to helping low performing schools and their students is commendable. There is a demonstrated need for the collaboration with the three target middle-level schools and there is an excellent partnership with USCA. A research and evaluation component for monitoring and adjusting is in place as well as a summative assessment upon completion of the project. Strong experienced leadership for the Center is evident and the use of the National Middle-Level School Association standards/principles strengthens the program.



The panel has several suggestions for the University of Aiken and its partner schools that we think will strengthen the Center further.

- For goal one, more details on student achievement and outcomes would help clarify this goal.
- Go beyond interdisciplinary and integrated curriculum.
- Think about social issues of middle level students.
- Review additional research/literature to identify other elements of highly effective middle schools.
- Look at the whole school and whole child experience-the umbrella and not just the “one spoke approach.”
- Include the role of parents and the connection with the community?
- Look personalizing the environment and making learning personal.
- Examine the research & literature on learning communities-it could offer help.
- Evaluation and Assessment costs need to be in the budget.
- You have a lot of generalizations that will need specifics as you move forward.
- Review the budget and resubmit - i.e., staffing amounts-are these monthly or yearly salaries? Percentage of salary is 70%? More detailed budget information is needed.
- Think about having teachers use a journal to record strategies they learned and tried in their classrooms and then share of with other teachers when they meet together as part of being a reflective practitioner.
- The use of an advisory board is good. How about establishing a management team for the Center which has representatives from all sectors of involvement?
- Utilize the National Middle School Association video series titled, *Successful Schools in Action* and other material from them as well as the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform (2006).
- Turning Points 2000 (Jackson & Davis) Teachers College Press is a good resource to use as it is a Carnegie Corp. Report on Middle School education; the NASSP publication titled, *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform*. (2006).
- Visit some exemplary Middle Schools and interview administrators and staff find out what works for them and why. No need to reinvent the wheel!

## Other Proposals Submitted and Reviewed

The other three proposals the panel reviewed were unique in their own way with some outstanding features and potential. All are to be commended for their efforts and encouraged to implement as much of the proposal as they can. A brief presentation of each proposal with some recommendations from the panel will be presented to inform readers of the report about each proposal.



# University of South Carolina Columbia

A Center of Excellence in the Advancement of Young Adolescent Learning (CEAYAL) was proposed by the University of South Carolina Columbia. The purpose of the Center was to create and sustain a model of school reform in two low performing schools, one rural and the other in the metropolitan Columbia area. The models were to focus on three research-based improvements: 1) building student-teacher relationships; 2) raising expectations; and 3) extending teacher knowledge. The schools chosen to participate as partners with USCC, Cyril B. Busbee Creative Arts Academy and North Central Middle School, would undergo a critical examination at their practices, research how successful schools with similar populations have raised test scores, begin piloting and implementing a plan that will lower student at-risk behavior, increase academic achievement, and support the growth of teachers through professional development.

Three Goals were stated with four major objectives and a series of activities designed for the implementation of each goal over the five year period.

## Goals

- Goal One:** Develop exemplary middle schools that implement developmentally appropriate curriculum, instruction, assessment, and organizational structures in order to raise achievement and strengthen relationships among members of the school community.
- Goal Two:** Institutionalize effective professional development that supports school-wide efforts toward school, district, and state goals.
- Goal Three:** Create models of partnerships that improve learning environments in low-performing high-needs middle schools in South Carolina.

The proposal presented a wealth of information drawn from the National Middle School Association, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform, and the Carnegie Report titled, *Turning Points: Educating Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, published by Teachers College Press in 2002. However, it was not clear how all of the information and research interfaced with the proposed goals and activities translating into improved student performance. Both quantitative and qualitative research were proposed for evaluation purposes using data from the School Report Card, and participant professional development surveys and observations. Achieving Professional Development School status and Schools-to-Watch recognition were stated as future goals for the Center.

There was strong support from the partnership districts and schools as evidenced not only by partnership agreements and support letters from all parties, but the panel was impressed by the large number of representatives from each partner that attended the presentation before the panel and spoke in support. The enthusiasm and passion of the proposed director of CEYAL as well as the support from the School Principals.



**SUMMARY:** The panel liked the enthusiasm of the proposal developers and partners as they presented the proposal. Some good research was quoted as background information but it was not clear how it was to be incorporated into the planned activities. The Graduate Courses need to be identified and the sustainability of the Center is unclear in terms of the institutional commitment. The first year of implementation needs to have a program. The budget needs to include funds for evaluation and assessment. Evaluation and assessment plans appear to be limited and need to be expanded. There is a narrow focus of staff and with approximately 14-20 participants and for full time teachers it would appear that the demands are very heavy. Talk with and include faculty with the whole school and not limit it as it now appears.

There were many things the panel liked in the proposal and encourage the partners to move ahead and implement as much as they can.

## **Claflin University**

A center on Middle Level Education was proposed by Claflin University. The primary purpose of the Center was to improve student achievement at the middle school level. To improve student achievement and assist in the creation of high performing middle schools, two goals were proposed:

- Goal One:** Improve the professional and content knowledge of pre-service middle level teachers and in-service middle level teachers in low performing districts; and
- Goal Two:** Improve the intellectual and individual development of middle school students at the targeted schools.

The Claflin proposal calls for partnerships with the following middle schools that have been identified as low-performing schools:

- Holly Hill Middle School (Orangeburg 3)
- Carver-Edisto Middle School (Orangeburg 4)
- Bethune-Bowman Middle School
- Robert E. Howard Middle School
- William J. Clark Middle School (Orangeburg 5)
- John Ford Middle School (Calhoun County)

Partnership agreements and letters of support from the District Superintendents were included in the proposal giving their approval and willingness to be part of the proposal. Unfortunately, there were no representatives from the schools at the presentation to the selection panel.



The stated outcomes stated for the Center were:

- Outcome One: A statistically significant increase in scores on the externally validated subject area content exams as measured through a pretest format (teacher knowledge).
- Outcome Two: Changes in and instructional practices and school culture as measured by the implementation of best practices identified from professional development courses and externally validated instruments to measure school culture (pre-post).
- Outcome Three: A 5% decrease in the percentage of students performing below basic on the areas of PACT assessment annually (25% over five years).

The proposal includes background information from a review of the literature, especially from *Turning Points: Educating Young Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, a Carnegie Report on middle level education. A primary premise of the proposal is based on the quality of the teacher making a difference in student's achievement. As a result a lot of the activities are focused on professional development workshops and seminars.

A proposed activity for the Center is the establishment of a Saturday Academy where students will be transported to Claflin University twice monthly to participate in a series of one-hour sessions, one-on-one tutoring provided by teacher education majors at Claflin, and seminars on career development and character building.

The proposal calls for both formative and summative evaluation but it is not clear what data collection procedures and instruments will be utilized.

The Dean of the School of Education, Dr. Tina Marshall-Bradley will serve as principal investigator of the Center and devote 10% of her time to the project. Dr. John D. Jones, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment will commit 25% of his time to the project as project director. Additionally, Drs. Howard, Dr. Vanderburg, and Dr. Archung were identified as Claflin faculty who will be involved.

**SUMMARY:** The panel appreciated the presentation by Dean Tina Marshall-Bradley and the passion she brings to the project. Like the other proposals, there were some unique features that were attractive and hold potential. It was obvious a review of the literature had occurred as it was cited in the proposal. The panel compliments the authors for stating three expected outcomes. We were especially appreciative of the willingness to set a percentage score (25% over five years) decrease in percentage of students performing below basic on the areas of PACT assessment.

There were some budget issues and the proposal needs to be revising and it needs to be revised including more specificity. It is suggested that it would be advisable to have more community resources involved. No funding was included in the budget for evaluation assessment.



It would have helped if there were representatives from the participating schools (Superintendents-Principals-Teachers, etc.) attending and participating in the presentation. Although there were letters of support from the school districts involved, the only letter of commitment from Claflin University was from the Dean of the School of Education. This raised a concern about the commitment from Administration above the Dean's level and the ultimate sustainability of the Center.

Lastly the proposal contained a lot of generalities and more specifics would have helped. For example, terms like learning communities, high performing middle school culture, young adolescent learning style, middle level socialization, self esteem, critical thinking, developmental realities, yet they were not clearly reflected in the implementation plans as how they would be used to enhance the Center's program activities. Lastly, there were many formatting and grammatical errors that were troublesome for the readers.

## **Coastal Carolina University**

A Center for Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap was proposed by Coastal Carolina University. The primary purpose of the Center was to raise the academic achievement of middle level students in high poverty schools by increasing the quality and quantity of middle level teachers through a state-of-the-art, clinically based pre-service and in-service program. Two goals and seven objectives were stated.

**Goal One:** To increase the quality and quantity of middle school teachers who are effective in raising the academic achievement in core content areas.

**Goal Two:** To design and implement a middle school program that is clinically based and prepares candidates to be effective in high poverty schools.

### Objectives:

1. To prepare teacher candidates to work effectively in high poverty middle schools through a state-of-the-art pre-service teacher preparation program.
2. To create and implement Professional Development Schools/small learning communities in targeted middle schools.
3. To provide intensive, sustained, on-going professional development to practicing middle school teachers.
4. To provide planning, training, and technical assistance in the new ADEPT instruments so that teachers and teacher candidates can implement the Unit Work Sample and address the needs of students from economically and culturally diverse backgrounds.
5. To provide beginning teachers with support during their first three years of teaching.



6. To assist experienced teacher in obtaining National Board Certification.
7. To create and disseminate a model of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive practices for middle school students in poverty settings.

Partnerships with three school districts (Horry, Georgetown, and Marion 7) and focusing on a high poverty low achieving middle school in each district to close the achievement gap were proposed. The three middle schools were Loris Middle School, Carvers Bay, and Creek Bridge.

One of the features of the proposal is the opportunity to collaborate with the Biddle Center for Teaching and Learning. The Director of the Biddle Center, Dr. Ana Maria Schuhman would serve as co-director of the new proposed along with Dr. Doug Smith of Coastal Carolina. Additionally, professors Smith, Cobb, Buckner, Savage-Davis and Toney will be affiliated with the Center.

A lengthy set of activities were delineated and it was reported that the Center will respond to the questions posed by the Caught Between the Lines (March 2006) report, and answer fourteen (14) questions they have developed related to the goals and objectives. Both formative and summative evaluation plans are included in the proposal.

**SUMMARY:** As with other proposal there were some exciting ideas that have potential. For example, providing beginning teachers with support during their first three years of teaching and the preparation of teachers at the pre-service level to work effectively in high poverty middle schools were included. However, the proposal seemed disjointed and it wasn't clear what really the major end product was as Professional Development Schools and teachers certified by the National Board, and TWS seemed to be more of the emphasis than working with low performing students to increase their understanding and knowledge. There was some concern that although closing the achievement gap was a worthy purpose, there wasn't enough focus on students and middle schools. The proposal needed better formatting and it needed to be checked for errors.

There were so many goals/objectives/questions/ and different focus such as ADEPT, Teacher certification, PDS, National Board, etc. that it was hard to get a handle on just what the Center would be doing. For example the abstract listed one overall purpose and then on page eight we have another purpose stated. It would have helped the panel if there were data presented about how many teachers would be involved and served. What changes would be made in the current middle level preparation program to meet the goals/objectives, etc.? There was no budget for evaluation and assessment which doesn't come free. Resume/Vita for other Coastal faculty who would be involved would have helped the panel better understand their expertise and role. It is suggested that the proposal authors look at *Turning Points (2002)*, *A Carnegie Report on Educating Adolescents in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and *Breaking Ranks in the Middle: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform* (2006) from the National Association of Secondary School Principals for additional ideas if you are going to build a state-of-the-art middle school program. Visiting middle schools that have been identified as successful or teacher preparation institutions that have been identified as having outstanding program to see what they are doing or have done would be helpful to you.



## General Comments About All the Proposals

1. There is much good literature about middle schools and middle school age children. Although some of the proposals addressed some of this literature and research, it needed to be used as the basis for programs to improve middle level education, and especially for low performing schools.
2. Proposals needed to be more specific about meeting the needs of adolescents in transition, middle level schools, and not to meet the agenda of higher education institutions (although this is important as well).
3. It would have been helpful if the proposals were to go back to the basics of being clear about what they are proposing, why they are proposing, and how they were going to accomplish it? Purpose, plan, budget, outcomes/evaluations.
4. There are some excellent resources about middle level schools and middle level students based upon a lengthy study of middle level education. The National Middle Level Association has some excellent material and including some video presentations that are superb. In addition they have some standards/principles that will help provide a foundation for middle level programs.
5. There is a report of the Carnegie Corporation who established the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development to study the compelling challenges of the adolescent years. The result is reported in a report titled, *Turning Points: Preparing Americas Youth for the 21<sup>st</sup>. Century*. The new *Turning Points (2000)* published By Teachers College Press, took the recommendations from the original work completed and published in 1989, created the Middle Grade School State Policy Initiative (MGSSPI) to not only update the original work, but to examine what has been learned from implementation of the original recommendations. There are nine chapters in the 2000 Turning Points book that are excellent for anyone looking at improving middle level education.
6. Lastly, The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) located in Reston, Virginia, has published a lengthy study/report on middle level education titled, *Breaking Ranks: Strategies for Leading Middle Level Reform* (2006). Ted Sizer and Deborah Meier contributed a foreword that introduces the Publication and its contribution. There are thirty (30) recommendations from the study clustered in three broad areas: (1) collaborative leadership and professional learning communities, (2) personalizing your school environment, and (3) making learning personal: curriculum, instruction, and assessment. A nice feature of the publication is that for every one of the 30 recommendations, there are examples of actual middle level schools that are practicing what the recommendation is saying.

Report Submitted by: Dr. Ron Joekel, Chair Review Panel



## **Attachment 2**

### **Centers of Excellence FY 2007-2008 Review Panel Members**

**Dr. Ronald Joekel – Chair**

Professor Educational Administration & Higher Education  
University of Nebraska

**Dr. JoAnne Anderson**

Executive Director,  
Education Oversight Committee

**Dr. Calvin Williams**

Director, Center of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Education  
Clemson University

**Dr. Phyllis Pendarvis**

Middle Level Teacher Education Initiative  
Grant Coordinator

**Dr. Tammy Pawloski**

Director, Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty  
Francis Marion University

**Mark A. Bounds**

Deputy Superintendent  
Division of Educator Quality and Leadership  
South Carolina Department of Education

**Dr. Charles Love**

Dean, School of Education  
USC- Upstate

**Rae McPherson**

Student Services  
Commission on Higher Education

Staff Support:

**Dr. Paula Gregg**

Program Manager  
Academic Affairs and Licensing  
Commission on Higher Education



**Proposal Abstracts**

**Claflin University – Center of Excellence on Middle Level Education – Dr. John Jones**

The primary purpose of the Center on Middle Level Education is to improve student achievement at the middle level. Evidence indicates that the quality of a teacher is the most salient school-related factor influencing student achievement (Rice, 2003). Additionally, middle schools that are exemplary in intellectual and individual development of young adolescents are imperative to developing and sustaining high performance middle schools (Cooney, 2000; Flowers et al., 2002).

The center will focus on two developmental strands; a) in-service teacher performance and b) middle level student performance. As a research base, the center will utilize empirical findings associated with curricula development, instructional strategies, and assessment appropriate for the middle level students. Services will be offered through state-approved professional development courses and graduate course work for in-service teachers; academic support services to middle level students, and character education and career exploration to middle level students in the targeted districts. The proposed center will provide these services to middle schools in Orangeburg 3, Orangeburg 4, Orangeburg 5, Calhoun County School Districts, other districts expressing interest (i.e., Florence 5).

The impact of the Center on middle level teacher practice, student achievement, changes in teacher knowledge and instructional practices in the classroom, and school culture will be assessed by directly observing and measuring the PACT scores. It is expected that teacher content and professional knowledge will improve and student achievement as measured by standardized assessments will increase.

The Center is partnering with middle schools in Orangeburg 3, Orangeburg 4, Orangeburg 5, and Calhoun County School Districts. The specific middle schools are Holly Hill Middle School (Orangeburg 3); Carver-Edisto Middle School (Orangeburg 4); Bethune-Bowman Middle School, Robert E. Howard Middle School, and William J. Clark Middle School (Orangeburg 5); and John Ford Middle School (Calhoun County). The following expected performance outcomes will be met:

1. A statistically significant increase in scores on the externally validated subject area content exams as measured through a pretest to posttest format (teacher knowledge)
2. Changes in and instructional practices and school culture as measured by the implementation of best practices identified from professional development courses and externally validate instrument to measure school culture (pre-post).
3. A 5% decrease in the percentage of students performing below basic on the areas of PACT assessment annually (25% over five years).



## **Coastal Carolina University – Center of Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap – Dr. Ana Maria Schuhmann**

The overall purpose of the Center of Excellence for Closing the Achievement Gap is to raise the academic achievement of middle school students in high poverty schools by increasing the quality and quantity of Middle School teachers through a state-of-the art, clinically based pre-service and in-service program. To accomplish the overall goal, the Center will implement activities designed to meet the following seven objectives: 1) to prepare teacher candidates to work effectively in high poverty middle schools, 2) to create and implement Professional Development Schools in targeted Middle Schools, 3) to provide intensive, sustained, on-going professional development to practicing Middle School teachers, 4) to provide planning, training and technical assistance in the Teacher/Unit Work Sample focusing on students from diverse backgrounds, 5) to provide beginning teachers with support during their first three years of teaching, 6) to assist experienced teachers in obtaining National Board Certification, 7) to create and disseminate a model of developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive practices for middle school students in poverty settings.

The Center is a partnership between Coastal Carolina University and three school districts, Horry, Georgetown and Marion 7. In each district, a high poverty, low achieving middle School will be targeted: Loris Middle, Carvers Bay and Creek Bridge. Activities include: creating small learning communities in each school; hiring clinical faculty/coaches for the three targeted schools; providing on-going support, and mentoring to pre-service and novice teachers; providing sustained on-site professional development in core content areas to all staff; offering workshops and seminars towards National Board certification; mentoring students; providing instruction and feedback on the implementation of Teacher Work Sample and ADEPT; revising the Middle School Program at Coastal Carolina University and disseminating lessons learned.

Activities during the school year will be site-based at the three targeted Middle Schools. During the summer, institutes will be offered for teachers in all the other middle schools in the three participating districts. First year activities will focus on Science and Literacy across the curriculum. All core content areas will be emphasized during the duration of the project.

Expected outcomes include the strengthening of the Middle School Program at Coastal Carolina University; an increase in the number of teacher candidates for the Middle School Program; an increase in the number of highly qualified Middle School teachers; increased retention of middle school teachers in high poverty schools; increased number of National Board certified teachers; increased academic achievement, high school graduation and post-secondary participation rates of middle school students.

Additionally, 684 or 18% of the students educated in these schools had identified disabilities. All of the schools had unsatisfactory or below average ratings in absolute scores on the PACT in 2005. The intended outcomes for this initiative include improved student and teacher engagement and performance in literacy.



## **University of South Carolina Aiken – Center of Excellence in Middle-level Interdisciplinary Strategies for Teaching (CE-MIST) – Dr. Gary Senn**

Purpose of the project: The purpose of CE-MIST is to develop and model state-of-the-art in-service and pre-service teacher training programs that concentrate on interdisciplinary curriculum development and implementation at the middle school level. CE-MIST will develop innovative practices that enable school personnel to improve student achievement; provide effective, sustained, high quality professional development; incorporate field-based teacher education programs that involve technology-based instructional techniques; and implement innovative practices for teaching children with diverse backgrounds and diverse learning styles. CE-MIST will model these programs as it provides professional development for higher education faculty around the state of South Carolina.

Activities to be implemented: Activities include hands-on activities at local schools and at the Ruth Patrick Science Education Center (RPSEC) for middle level students. Activities will concentrate on interdisciplinary topics in an integrated curriculum that are both relevant and challenging. Science activities chosen for this project will also include aspects of social studies and mathematics. The RPSEC has a long history of successfully offering such programs and will develop further this successful strategy. A variety of professional development activities will be provided for in-service teachers. A variety of delivery modes will be employed including school-based; university-based; web-based; and two-way, interactive video-based. Activities will be available for pre-service teachers including changes to the core curriculum with input from the CE-MIST staff and activities with students from low-performing schools. Higher education faculty will engage in professional development activities that will be held at USCA and have a distance education component.

Target population to be served: The target population will be students and teachers from low-performing schools as identified by the CHE, 2005 Report Card Ratings for Middle Schools. During the first year of the project, two schools from Aiken County and one school from Edgefield County will participate in the project. Pre-service teachers and higher education faculty will also be served.

Expected outcomes: A new Middle Level School program was recently established at USCA. CE-MIST will work closely with this program to develop it into a model program for the State of South Carolina that will prepare effective middle level educators. CE-MIST will empower teachers by providing professional development activities that are aligned with South Carolina Professional Development Standards and the NMSA Masters Level Preparation Standards. These activities will enable teachers to understand the state content and assessment standards and implement strategies to help all students meet or exceed those standards. Students involved with CE-MIST will improve their standardized test scores as a result of engaging in meaningful, hands-on activities that inspire them to learn.

School and/or district partners: During Year One of the project, CE-MIST will partner with A.L. Corbett Middle School and Leavelle McCampbell Middle School in Aiken County. CE-MIST will also partner with Johnston-Edgefield-Trenton (JET) Middle School in Edgefield



County. During subsequent years, CE-MIST will partner with other low-performing schools in other districts.

### **University of South Carolina – Center of Excellence in the Advancement of Young Adolescent Learning – Dr. Jennifer Wilson**

*Purpose of the Project:* The proposed Center of Excellence in the Advancement of Young Adolescent Learning (CEAYAL) is dedicated to creating and sustaining a model of school reform in two low performing schools: one rural and one in the metropolitan Columbia area. These models will focus on three research-based improvements: 1) building student-teacher relationships, 2) raising expectations, and 3) extending teacher knowledge. These target areas will be explored in-depth by each school. The schools will take a critical look at their own practices, research how successful schools with similar populations have raised test scores, and begin piloting and implementing a plan that will ultimately lower student at-risk behavior, increase academic achievement, and support the growth of teachers through effective professional development.

*Activities to be Implemented:* Each school will select a leadership team of 7-10 teachers who represent all grade levels, content areas, and special interest groups in the school. The first year, this leadership team will study exemplary middle schools using the lens of the three target areas listed above. This study will include focusing on current research, visiting exemplary middle schools, completing a school self-study, and creating a project proposal for year two. During the second year of CEAYAL, the K-12 partners will pilot each school's proposal and share results with their respective middle school faculties. Data-based revisions to the project will be made at this time as the leadership team prepares for whole-school implementation. During years three and four, each middle school will implement their projects in full, document changes based on data collected, and make appropriate revisions as suggested by the data. The last CHE funded year of CEAYAL will focus on sustainability and dissemination. Each school will create materials to share their model of excellence with schools and educators in South Carolina and around the nation. Each school will apply to become a University of South Carolina (USC) professional development school (PDS) and for Schools-to-Watch recognition so that they can continue to work closely with the College of Education and other educators around the nation to learn and grow in the field.

*Target Population and School Partners:* Cyril B. Busbee Creative Arts Academy and North Central Middle School were chosen based on several criteria. First, they meet or exceed the requirements for the South Carolina Commission for Higher Education grant. Both schools are at a poverty index at or above 81, have a "below average" EAA absolute rating, and are traditionally underserved schools. The second criterion for school selection was location. Each school is located in a distinct geographic area that was representative of middle schools in South Carolina. The location also needed to be within an hour drive from USC in order for the schools to be able to garner resources for their projects, enroll teachers in courses, and build a relationship with the other middle school participating in the center. The last criterion in choosing the schools was the degree to which the faculty felt the proposed center would benefit



their school. By giving the middle schools' faculty a voice in the decision-making process, there would be greater ownership and thus provide more effective results.

*Expected Outcomes:* The outcomes expected from CEAYAL's work includes creating and nurturing two PDS sites as part of the USC School-University Partnership Network, providing demonstration sites of exemplary middle schools for educators around South Carolina as recognized by Schools-To-Watch, recruiting teachers to high needs schools, raising PACT scores in all areas (ELA, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies), and contributing to the research-base on effective middle level education in diverse settings.



## Attachment 4

Centers of Excellence								
Center Name	Project PI	Institution	Address	2004 – 2005	2005 – 2006	2006 – 2007	2006-07	Year of Funding
Center of Excellence for Engineering and Computing Education	Dr. Jed S. Lyons	University of South Carolina – Columbia	College of Engineering and Information Technology	\$135,000.00	\$112,500.00	\$110,333.00	\$110,333.00	Yr 5 (of 5)
Center of Excellence for the Advancement of Rural, Under-Performing Schools (CEARUPS)	Dr. Jeff Priest	University of South Carolina – Aiken	School of Education	\$133,657.00	\$112,870.00	\$110,696.00	\$110,696.00	Yr 5 (of 5)
Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty	Dr. Tammy Pawloski	Francis Marion University	School of Education	\$150,000.00	\$135,000.00	\$110,333.00	\$110,333.00	Yr 4 (of 5)
Center of Excellence in Collaborative Learning	Dr. Maryellen Ham	University of South Carolina - Beaufort	USCB/JCSD Partnership	\$133,567.00	\$120,210.00	\$98,246.00	\$98,246.00	Yr 4 (of 5)
Center of Excellence for Adolescent Literacy and Learning	Dr. Victoria Ridgeway	Clemson University	School of Education		\$149,978.00	\$132,381.00	\$112,484.00	Yr 3 (of 5)
Center of Excellence for the Advancement of New Literacies in Middle Grades	Dr. Paula Egelson and Dr. Mary Provost	College of Charleston	School of Education			\$147,111.00	\$132,400.00	Yr 2 (of 5)



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education  
Proposal Review Rubric/Rating Form  
Centers of Excellence Program FY 2007-08

**Please use one Proposal Review Rubric/Rating Form for each proposal.  
Be prepared to rank order the 5 proposals.**

Proposal Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitting Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Project Director: \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION I: General Characteristics of a Center**

YES	NO	Does the proposed Center demonstrate the following?
_____	_____	A clearly defined focus of related scholarly and educational activities related to the needs of low-performing schools.
_____	_____	Activities that support existing programs at the institution.
_____	_____	Clearly defined benefits to the host institution as well as its K-12 partner(s)
_____	_____	An institutional commitment as indicated by administrative support, budget, facilities, equipment, special initiatives, etc.
_____	_____	A likelihood of having a lasting positive impact on the K-12 partner(s).
_____	_____	Activities based on proven innovative practices that enable school personnel to help all students achieve.

**COMMENTS:**



## SECTION II: Technical Merits of the Proposal

YES	NO	Does the proposal include the following?
_____	_____	The area to be targeted has been identified in the <i>Guidelines</i> as a priority area for funding.
_____	_____	Programs and activities are designed in collaboration with a K-12 partner(s) that has been identified in the <i>Guidelines</i> as low-performing.
_____	_____	The activities are well planned and meaningful.
_____	_____	The outcomes are realistic and likely to be obtained.
_____	_____	The evaluation plan is based on measurable criteria and addressed the effectiveness of the center.
_____	_____	The budgets, both grants and external match, are justified.
_____	_____	The institutional strength and capacity to implement <sup>6</sup> the Center are substantial as indicated by faculty and programmatic quality, previous collaborative endeavors with education stakeholders in related program areas, etc.
_____	_____	Programs and activities are designed in collaboration with other Centers of Excellence and/or Teacher Recruitment Centers in all appropriate related activities.

**COMMENTS:**



### SECTION III: Specific Criteria of a Center

YES	NO	Does the proposal include discussion of the following?
_____	_____	Involves substantial public school-college cooperation/collaboration.
_____	_____	Involves other parties affected by the Center's programs, including other divisions of the institution, other institutions of higher education, professional associations, parents, private sector, etc.
_____	_____	State funds are matched with external or internal funds (including in-kind) and show an increasing commitment of these additional resources in subsequent years.
_____	_____	Describes expected benefits to pre-service teacher education.
_____	_____	Describes the proposed Center Director's qualifications as well as other faculty/support staff who will work with the Center.
_____	_____	Proposed professional development activities are in alignment with S. C. Professional Development Standards.
_____	_____	Demonstrates the institution's commitment to model as well as develop state-of-the art programs by changing its ongoing academic program as a result of the Center's work.
_____	_____	The proposal has a clear plan for achievement which will lead to success of the proposed goals and objectives.
_____	_____	The proposed program is consistent with ongoing curriculum, assessment, teacher preparation, or professional development activities in the State.

**COMMENTS:**



**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

Please use this space for additional comments and your overall rating of the proposal.

**OVERALL RATING OF THIS PROPOSAL:**

\_\_\_\_\_ Excellent      \_\_\_\_\_ Very Good      \_\_\_\_\_ Good      \_\_\_\_\_ Fair      \_\_\_\_\_ Poor

Rank Order (among the 4 proposals)    1        2        3        4        5

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_



**EIA CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE  
PROPOSAL REVIEW PANEL  
MARCH 7, 2007  
8:30 am – 3:00 pm  
CHE Conference Room**

8:30 – 9:15 a.m. Coffee, Snacks and Introductions  
Review Agenda  
Overview of Centers of Excellence Criteria and Review  
Procedures

\*9:30 – 10:00 University of South Carolina Proposal Presentation

\*10:15 – 10:45 Claflin University Proposal Presentation

\*11:00 – 11:30 Coastal Carolina University Proposal Presentation

\*11:45 – 12:15 USC-Aiken Proposal Presentation

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

1:30 p.m. Panel discusses each proposal  
Panel determines the 07-08 Center of Excellence

3:00 p.m. Meeting adjourns

\* Institutional representative will be invited to present individually

**Thank you for sharing your expertise in Middle School Content, your  
contribution to the discussion and your thoughtful decision.**